

PROJECT SUMMARY

SNC Reference Number
(enter if previously assigned)

SNC 080146

County: El Dorado County
Applicant: American River Conservancy
Project Title: Purchase of the Gold Hill Ranch and Wakamatsu Colony Site

PROJECT GOAL

The goal of this project is to *acquire and protect* the natural and cultural resources of the 272 acre Gold Hill Ranch in western El Dorado County. The purchase of this property will protect the headwaters and wetlands associated with two major tributaries of the South Fork American River, Granite and Shingle Creek. These two creeks provide critical habitat to an important natural fishery supporting an assemblage of five native fish species. Other riparian species found on the ranch and tributaries include the western pond turtle, California newt, slender salamander and foothill yellow-legged frog. The project will also protect 120 acres of valley and blue oak woodland and over 200 species of wildlife found on or near the subject lands.

The sizeable riparian/wetland interface located on the property acts as a filtration system for the large aquifer located below the surface. This low elevation, wet-meadow system stores rain and run-off and gradually releases high-quality water downstream. Protecting these ranch lands from subdivision and development will contribute to the maintenance of water quality flowing downstream to Sacramento and other urban areas and will assist in the moderation of seasonal flooding downstream.

The purchase of the property will also protect two internationally significant and unique cultural resources including the site of the first Japanese colony in North America, the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Farm Colony established in 1869 and the gravesite of the celebrated Okei Ito, the first Japanese person buried on American soil in 1871. This site has been determined by the State Historic Preservation Officer to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at a *national level of significance*. This project will advance the promotion of agricultural tourism in El Dorado County and complement the regions wineries, orchards and Farm Trail enterprises.

PROJECT SCOPE

\$1 million in SNC grant funds would be matched by \$2.29 million from private donors and other federal grant funding to acquire these subject lands in fee, from a willing seller at the approved, fair market value. All SNC grant funds would be used towards the purchase price of \$3.29 million. The SNC grant and matching funds would purchase and protect 272 acres including .97 miles of tributary stream, 40 acres of wetlands and 120 acres of valley and blue oak woodland. The purchase of this ranch is the first and essential step within a larger project that will enhance wetland corridors with native tree and shrub plantings, and the establishment of a *discovery trail* that interprets the site's remarkable cultural history including: Native American residential sites (from 4,000 BC to the early 1850's), the gold rush mining encampments; the homesteading of the Charles Graner family in 1853; the colonization by the first Japanese colonists with the founding of the Wakamatsu Colony in 1868 and the farming operation of the Veerkamp family from 1875 to present day. Project partners include the *Bureau of Land Management (BLM)* which will take title to the property as well as the *State Dept. of Parks and Recreation ("State Parks")* who maintain a collection of Wakamatsu Colony artifacts and will assist with interpretation on the site, the *Gold Hill Wakamatsu Colony Foundation* which will continue to raise maintenance and development funding and will provide volunteers for public interpretive tours and the *American River Conservancy* who will complete the Ranch acquisition and restoration of the historic Graner House with California Cultural and Historical Endowment (CCHE) grant funds. To date, the American River Conservancy has raised \$448,000 in purchase funding from private sources and \$483,750 in restoration funding for the Graner House. Remaining purchase funding is expected to be raised from a federal Bureau of Land Management appropriation introduced and sponsored by Congresswoman Matsui and Senator Barbara Boxer. This appropriation package is expected to be passed by Congress in early December, 2008.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Letters of support are provided from the following persons and organizations:

- State Office of Historic Preservation (National Register Eligibility Letter);
- Congresswoman Doris Matsui;
- Makoto Yamanaka – Consul General of Japan;
- Assemblyman Alan Nakanishi;
- County Supervisor Ron Briggs;
- Japanese American Citizens League (National Chapter);
- National Japanese American Historical Society;
- Dr. John Van Sant (Wakamatsu Colony Historian);
- Gold Hill Wakamatsu Colony Foundation (Board Resolution of Support);
- Mary Jean Eisenhower – President of People-to-People International;
- Robert Wiswell – President High Sierra Resource Conservation & Development Area;
- The El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce;
- Gold Trail Union School District;
- Dr. Susan Lindstrom and Jean Starns – Archaeologists and Historians.

There are an additional 207 letters of support from project donors on file with the American River Conservancy. Copies of these letters of support are available upon request.

SNC PROJECT DELIVERABLES AND SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
INCLUDE SPECIFIC TASKS IDENTIFIED IN SCOPE AND ALL REPORTS, ETC.	ASSUME START DATE 60 DAYS AFTER SNC BOARD AUTHORIZATION
Close of escrow	June 1, 2009
Final Report	July 1, 2009

SNC PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
INCLUDE COSTS FOR STAFF, TASKS, DELIVERABLES AND PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES	
SNC Purchase Funding of the 272 acre Gold Hill Ranch	\$1,000,000
(Fee title will pass from the current owner to ARC to the BLM)	\$
Final Report and Documentation of Title Transfer*	\$ -0-
	\$
SNC GRANT TOTAL	\$1,000,000

***Note:** All other escrow fees, staff time associated with the purchase of the subject property and all other hard costs associated with the project will be paid for by the applicant, the American River Conservancy. One hundred percent (100%) of SNC grant funds will be applied to the approved, purchase price of the subject Gold Hill Ranch.